

# MISSOURI REENTRY PROCESS



*Report to the Governor*  
2005

## **INTRODUCTION:**

One of the most pressing and complex changes facing state government in Missouri and across the nation today is the reintegration of adult offenders from prison back into the community. Ninety-seven percent of all male and female offenders committed to Missouri prisons will someday be released from incarceration. During fiscal year 2005, 20,684 individuals were released from incarceration in Missouri. It is in everyone's best interest that released offenders reenter society safely and live as productive, law-abiding, and self-sufficient citizens.

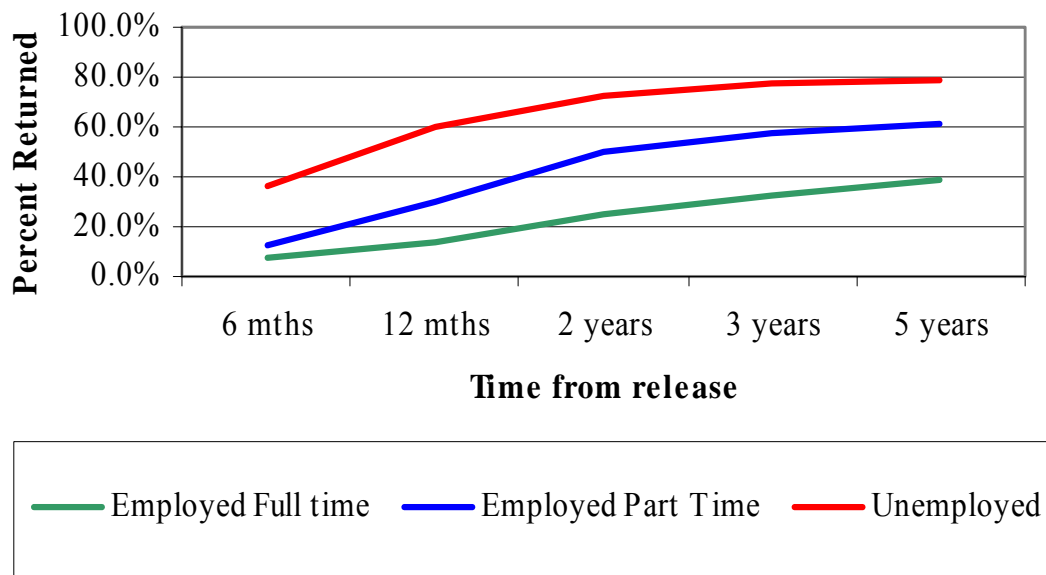
Missouri has adopted an innovative transition model developed by the Department of Justice, National Institute of Corrections, as a philosophical framework for improving offender transition processes. This approach proposes that states can increase public safety, close the revolving door of incarceration, diminish new victimization, and break the cycle of offenders' children becoming the next generation of offenders. This can be accomplished by forming strategic and tactical partnerships to integrate and coordinate basic policies, and to sustain and nurture those partnerships and policies over time.

On September 21, 2005, Governor Matt Blunt signed Executive Order 05-33 establishing a permanent inter-agency Missouri Reentry Process (MRP) Steering Team comprised of senior leaders from the Departments of Corrections, Mental Health, Social Services, Health and Senior Services, Economic Development, Elementary and Secondary Education, Revenue and the Office of the State Courts Administrator. Membership also includes community organizations representing crime victims, law enforcement, treatment providers and the faith-based community. This Executive Order defines the MRP Steering Team's mission as the successful integration of offender reentry principles and practices in state agencies and communities resulting in partnerships that enhance offender self-sufficiency, reduce re-incarceration, and improve public safety.

Based upon analysis of Missouri quantitative and qualitative baseline data, the MRP Steering Team identified factors that are highly correlated with successful transition or recidivism and developed strategies to address these factors.

## **EMPLOYMENT:**

- Unemployment and underemployment are the leading factors of offenders being returned to prison. Data shows that offenders who do not find full time employment upon release are much more likely to return to prison than those who do. Employment provides adequate income that is critical to the offender's overall stability in the community.



To address this specific issue of employment, the following strategies have been implemented.

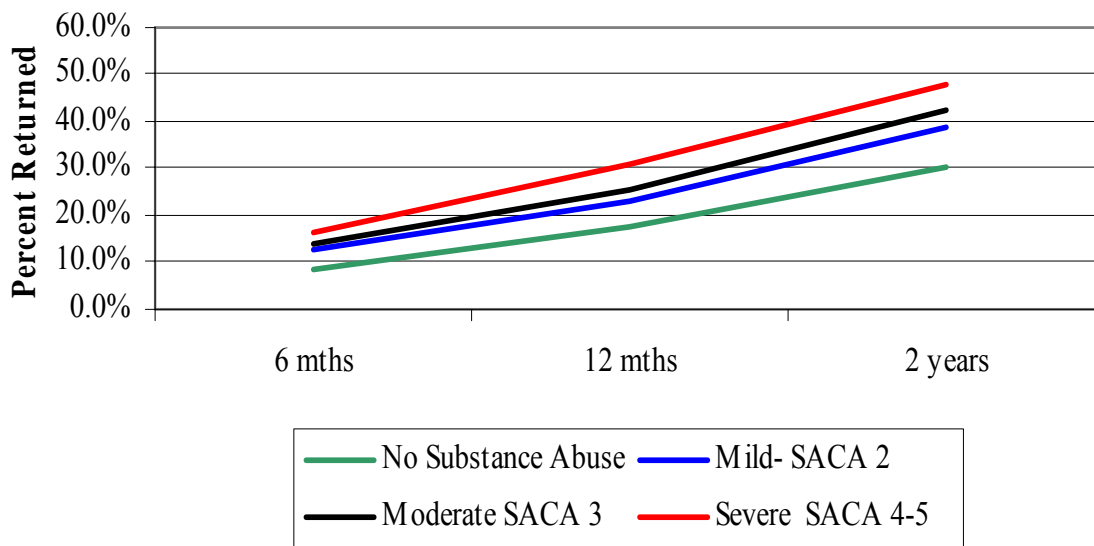
- Offenders are receiving Employability Skills/Life Skills programming. This 10 – 12 week program covers a wide variety of topics that include assessing skills and abilities, completing employment applications, interviewing techniques, family relationships, self-esteem, marriage, parenting, budgeting and other life skills citizens are faced with in their daily lives.
- The Department of Corrections and the Division of Workforce Development are working together to assist offenders with obtaining employment soon after release thereby reducing recidivism rates and saving taxpayers' dollars. Before release, all offenders are screened for services offered at local one-stop Career Centers such as Parents Fair Share, Career Assistance Program, and Veterans Services, etc. Offenders are registered in Great Hires and have a scheduled appointment with a Career Center before their release from incarceration.
- The Department of Corrections and the Division of Workforce Development have initiated a public information program that emphasizes the benefits of hiring ex-offenders. The Missouri Reentry Process Video and various materials are being shared with the community. The "Employing Ex-Offenders" brochure was developed to educate prospective employers about the benefits of hiring offenders.
- With reentry into the labor market being one of the most challenging situations an ex-offender faces, the Department of Corrections, in collaboration with the Division of Workforce Development, has implemented Institutional Job Fairs. The goal of these Job Fairs is to familiarize offenders who are soon to be released with the types of

employment opportunities available to them and to expose potential employers to a skilled workforce pool they may not have previously considered.

- Ensuring offenders have a social security card, birth certificate, and state identification card when released from prison will directly impact the ability for an offender to obtain employment within the first 60 days after their release. To address this barrier of employment, Department of Corrections' staff are assisting offenders with obtaining replacement social security cards through an informal agreement with the Social Security Administration. The Department of Corrections has partnered with the Department of Revenue and the Department of Health and Senior Services to assist offenders with obtaining a birth certificate and state identification card before their release.

### **SUBSTANCE ABUSE:**

- The Department of Corrections estimates that 75% of offenders in Missouri need substance abuse treatment services. Although substance abuse treatment is offered within correctional facilities, there is considerable variance in the types and quality of programs and services provided from one facility to another. Data reflects those offenders leaving a treatment setting and being linked with aftercare immediately upon release are less likely to return to prison.



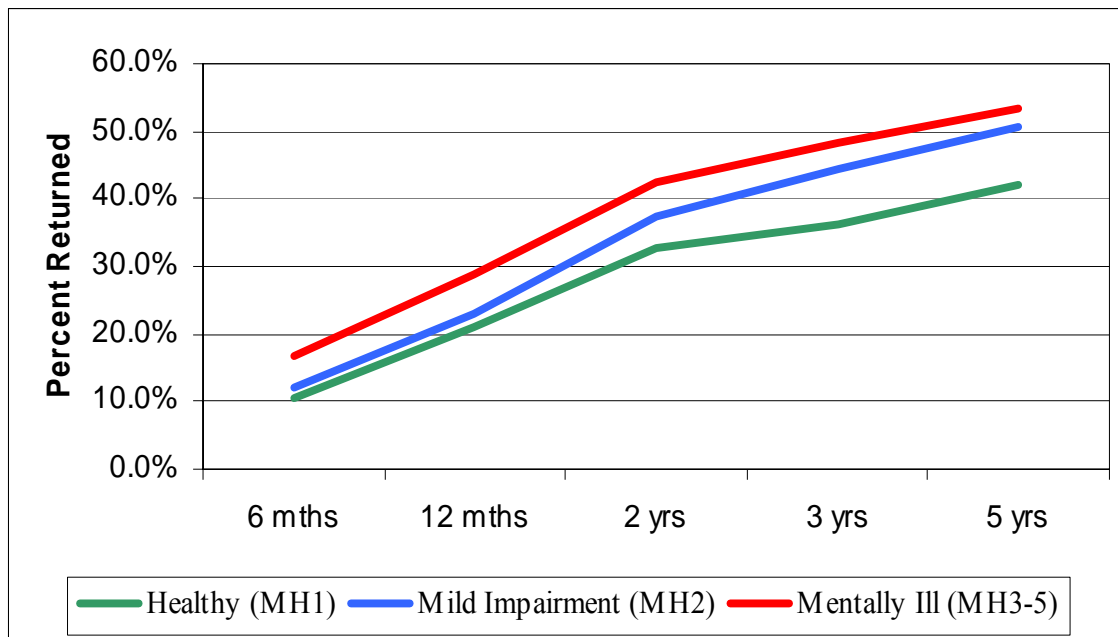
*\*\*SACA – Substance Abuse Classification Assessment determines level of involvement with drug and/or alcohol.*

In an effort to address the serious issue of substance abuse and aftercare, the following strategies have been implemented:

- The Department of Corrections and the Department of Mental Health, Division of Alcohol and Drug Abuse, are collaborating to revise the Code of State Regulations placing an emphasis on certification of institutional treatment programming, discharge planning and continuity of care.
- Community-based treatment programs now offer individualized programming that helps offenders succeed in both employment and substance abuse treatment without one interfering with the other. A standardized substance abuse screening and assessment tool has been implemented for offenders in reception and diagnostic centers and in the community.

## MENTAL HEALTH:

- Over 75% of offenders with serious mental health issues return to prison within five years of release. Although mental health care is offered within the institutions, there is a poor coordination of care for transition from prison to the community. Without a well-designed discharge planning process, offender needing/receiving mental health services are at high risk of having necessary services disrupted. Discharge planning begins early and is continuously addressed and updated until the offender is discharged or released. Proper discharge planning assures better communication between the institution, field probation and parole and community providers.

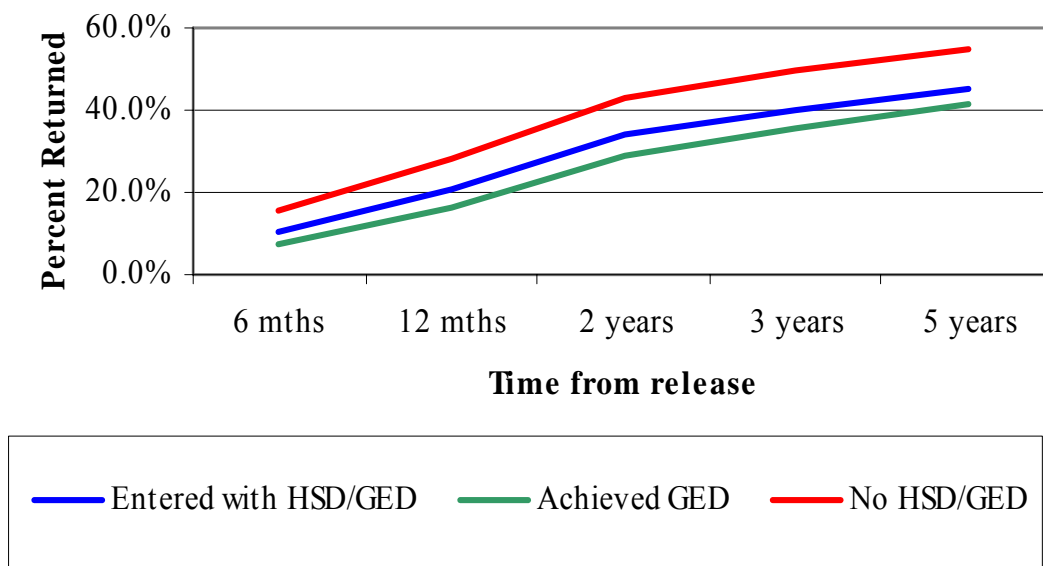


In an effort to address the serious risk of releasing offenders with untreated mental health conditions, the following strategies have been implemented.

- In February 2005, the Department of Corrections' policy, D5-8.12 Mental Health Discharge Planning, was finalized. This policy established guidelines for preparing offenders with serious mental illness for discharge to the community.
- The Department of Corrections and Department of Social Services are collaborating to assist potentially eligible offenders with applying for Medicaid 90 days prior to release. This will ensure continuity of care for most persistent, chronically mental ill and medically disabled offenders.
- There is no current standard of care for agencies or professionals working with offenders unless they are certified by the Department of Mental Health or contracted by the Department of Corrections. Consequently, there is also variance in the quality of mental health services provided, including conditions under which information is shared; level of involvement of field officers and family members; assessment, treatment planning, treatment evaluation, and discharge planning. To address this, the Department of Corrections and Department of Mental Health collaborated to develop Guidelines for Mental Health and Substance Abuse Treatment professionals providing professional clinical services to offenders under probation or parole field supervision. The guidelines also delineate expectations of probation and parole officers in the referral and treatment process.

## EDUCATION:

- Approximately 55% of offenders without a high school diploma or GED return to prison.



In an effort to promote education, the following strategies have been implemented.

- Data shows that praise is the single most powerful motivator for good behavior and achievement. Offenders participating in GED classes are provided an Academic Achievement Report every thirty days.
- Data shows that offenders who raise their vocational skill level while in prison have a much lower return to prison rate than those with no vocational skills five years after release. All Missouri Vocational Enterprises (MVE) programs are now classified as vocational training and have received accreditation from the U.S. Department of Labor.

## **FAMILY:**

- Studies show that continued contact with family members during and following incarceration can reduce recidivism and foster integration into the community. The Department of Corrections is providing training to staff working in the visiting room focused on offender and family dynamics, family values and the importance of family and pro-social relationships. The University of Missouri – Extension provides Building Strong Families; a strength-based program to help families identify and build strengths, face their challenges and make informed choices.
- Data shows offenders in prison and under community supervision report having 112,246 dependent children. A high percentage of offenders are not receiving visits from their children. The Department of Corrections is piloting Supportive Parent/Child Visitation (SPCV) Model for incarcerated parents, their children, and other family members at the Algoa Correctional Center and Western Reception, Diagnostic and Correctional Center. SPCV focuses on healing and building positive relationships, pre-visit preparation, structured visits and post-visit debriefings.

## **TRANSITIONAL HOUSING UNITS:**

The transition model identified the importance of pre-release planning, intensively occurring six months short of an offender's release date into the community. The Department of Corrections currently has five institutions that maintain a Transition Housing Unit (THU) within the correctional facility. Those five institutions include Algoa Correctional Center, Boonville Correctional Center, Western Reception, Diagnostic and Correctional Center, Women's Eastern Reception, Diagnostic and Correctional Center and Missouri Eastern Correctional Center. Six more institutions will have implemented a THU in their facility by June 1, 2006. Those institutions include Western Missouri Correctional Center, Chillicothe Correctional Center, Moberly Correctional Center, Maryville Treatment Center, Tipton Correctional Center and the Cremer Therapeutic Community Center. The purpose of these THU's is to do intense pre-release preparation with the offenders who are six months short of their release date. Pre-release preparation includes continuity of care for mental health, medical and substance abuse treatment, employment search, identification, faith based links to the community, child support and care, transportation, education needs, family support, pro-social community participation, impact on victims, cognitive skills, insurance, and any other areas relative to the needs identified by the

staff and the offender. The offender is essentially given a “toolbox” with the tools needed to be successful and is held accountable for doing such.

## **OUTCOME MEASURES**

The MRP Steering Team is currently designing outcome measures in each domain in order to measure success. Each partner has been asked to produce measurements relative to their specific agency. It is critical the team is able to demonstrate the success of this collaborative philosophy by showing the reduction of offenders returning to the Department of Corrections. However, there are other measurements that will show success in the domains of mental health, substance abuse, medical, employment, family, transportation, housing, and education. The MRP Steering Team will be able to share data based on these outcome measures in the January 2007 report.

## **IN CLOSING...**

The MRP Steering Team continues to meet on a monthly basis to review and design new collaborative strategies, resolve issues, and identify more efficient and effective policies and practices. The MRP Steering Team provides an excellent opportunity for information sharing between state agencies to enhance communication, reduce duplication of effort and maximize the use of state resources while making offender transition from prison to the community successful. Information sharing between state agencies is crucial for MRP to be successful. Advances in technological resources and incompatibility of computer databases have hindered information sharing between state agencies. The MRP Steering Team is currently working with Dan Ross, Director of Information Technology Systems, Office of Administration, to develop strategies that can be utilized by the partnering state agencies to apply state resources in an efficient, effective and coordinated manner.

The next report on progress of the Missouri Reentry Process will be submitted in January 2007. Should you have any questions, please contact the Director of the Department of Corrections, Larry Crawford at 573-751-2389.